UNITED NATIONS **S**

Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1999/1057
14 October 1999

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 12 OCTOBER 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SUDAN TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Please find enclosed an article by Reuters dated 12 October 1999, entitled "US senator questions 1998 bombing in Sudan" (see annex)

The article states that the Chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, after a CIA briefing on Tuesday, said he still questioned the quality of evidence that led to the US bombing of the Al-Shifa Pharmaceutical Company in the Sudan last year and the timing of the attack. The Chairman stated: "I'm still troubled by the timing of the response by the US and I'm also concerned still about the standard of the evidence used".

This statement by the Chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee represents further evidence that the pretexts given by the US for the bombing of the Al-Shifa factory were flimsy, unsupported by any material evidence and based on faulty, misleading intelligence.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Elfatih ERWA
Permanent Representative

Annex

US senator questions 1998 bombing in Sudan

[Latest News From Sudan At Sudan.Net]

News Article by REUTERS on October 12, 1999 at 22:11:42:

US senator questions 1998 bombing in Sudan
By Tabassum Zakaria

WASHINGTON, Oct 12 (Reuters) - The chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, after a CIA briefing on Tuesday, said he still questioned the quality of evidence that led to the U.S. bombing of a pharmaceutical company in Sudan last year and the timing of the attack.

"We had a closed hearing on the Al-Shifa situation today," Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Richard Shelby said, referring to the name of the pharmaceutical firm in Sudan.

"I'm still troubled by the timing of the response by the U.S. and I'm also concerned still about the standard of the evidence used," he said after the closed-door briefing by CIA Director George Tenet.

The United States destroyed the Al-Shifa pharmaceutical plant near Khartoum with cruise missiles in August 1998, wounding seven people, one of whom later died. It also bombed an area of Afghanistan that the United States believed was a base camp for followers of Saudi exile Osama bin Laden.

Both U.S. attacks were in retaliation for bombings earlier that month of two U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania which killed at least 226 people amd wounded more than 4,000. The United States has accused bin Laden of planning the attack.

The United States picked the Sudanese pharmaceutical company as a target because of a soil sample that showed the ingredient Empta, which is an ingredient of VX nerve gas.

U.S. policymakers made the decision to bomb that plant based on U.S. intelligence information that Empta was allegedly only used in Iraq's formula for VX nerve gas and that people at the pharmaceutical plant were visiting Iraqis linked to that country's suspected VX operation.

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The link to bin Laden was more tangential, but the United States believed the Saudi millionaire was allegedly seeking another large-scale operation against the United States.

Sudan and critics of the bombing said the pharmaceutical firm was just manufacturing medicines. The United States removed a freeze on the U.S. assets of Saleh Idris, the owner of the pharmaceutical factory in May. Idris's lawyer said indicated there was no proof that he was linked to any terrorist group.

The timing of the bombing has been questioned by some critics of President Bill Clinton as a possible attempt to create a distraction from the mess over the public revelations of his affair with Monica Lewinsky that eventually led to his impeachment.

Asked whether he considered the bombing of the pharmaceutical company in Sudan unjustified, Shelby, an Alabama Republican, responded: "I wouldn't say that. I just said that I was still troubled by the timing and the standard of evidence."

Two other senators who attended the CIA briefing said unequivocally that the bombing was justified.

Sen. Robert Kerrey, a Nebraska Democrat who is Vice Chairman of the committee, acknowledged the perception problem surrounding the timing of the bombing, but said the attack was justified.

"I mean the context was a bit of a problem because it came right after the president's deposition (on Lewinsky) and the movie 'Wag the Dog' was out, and there was a lot of evaluation of this thing after the fact," he said. The movie involved a plot to distract public attention from a presidential sex scandal by involving the United States in a foreign conflict.

"But the United States of America was attacked," Kerrey said. "We know that Sudan is supporting terrorism, we know that they harbour people that have hostile intent against the United States of America, and we see enough relationships here I think that reach a conclusion this is a reasonable target."

Sen. John Chafee, a Rhode Island Republican, said after the briefing: "I have always felt that bombing was justified.